

MINUTES FROM THE UNITED VETERANS' GROUPS OF OREGON MEETING

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2020

HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO TELECONFERENCE

Meeting called to order by **Chair, Mary J. Mayer**, at **12:04 p.m.**

Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation: The Chair gave the invocation, as Jack LaBox was ill.

Roll Call of Organizations/Voting Members: 11 of 15

Regular Members Present were:

- AFA (Bill Tidd)
- American Legion (John Lee, Flynn Phillips)
- AUSA (Curt Loop)
- DAV (Henry Hamel)
- 40 and 8 (Jim Willis)
- MOAA (Tom Majchrowski, Dennis Merrill)
- NAANV (Fred Schafer)
- NCOA (Robert Haltiner)
- VFW (Wayne Sharp)
- Chair (Mary J. Mayer)
- Past Chair (Wayne Harvey)

Regular Members Absent were:

- KWVA
- MOPH
- OPVA
- VVA

Associate Member: DAV Auxiliary State Commander, Karen Haltiner

Guest Attendees were:

- Sarah Callen (Marine Corps League – Klamath)
- Kelly Fitzpatrick (ODVA Director)
- Sheronne Blasi (ODVA Director, Statewide Veteran Services)
- Jennifer Donovan (ODVA Senior Policy Advisor)
- Tony Sebbio (MOAA Portland Chapter Host for Zoom Video Teleconference)
- Marco Oswald, AFA and MOAA Life Member

CHAIR'S COMMENTS: Chair Mary J. Mayer welcomed all members and guests to the second regularly scheduled virtual UVGO Meeting. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governor's guidance, the UVGO Meetings will continue to be virtual until the restrictions are lifted, and it is safe to meet face-to-face.

Since some members were not present at the July 11, 2020 UVGO Meeting, Mary reviewed the Strategic Goals for 2020-2021:

- Continue to increase membership in UVGO,
- Continue to increase visibility of UVGO,
- Invite guest speakers and legislators to the meetings to educate that group on various topics and legislative issues, and
- Identify 2-3 pieces of legislation to adopt and champion for the 2021 Legislative Season.

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT:

A motion was made and seconded that the minutes of the July 11, 2020 UVGO Meeting be approved; the motion was passed. For the Financial Report, the Secretary/Treasurer reported that the beginning balance as of July 1, 2020 was \$5,52789; income was \$220.00 and there were no disbursements. The ending balance as of October 1, 2020 was \$5,747.89. A motion was made and seconded that the Financial Report be approved; the motion was passed. All members have paid their dues.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS UPDATE:

Kelly Fitzpatrick, ODVA Director, stated that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfires, ODVA was doing very well and keeping its strong and resilient staff safe and well by largely having them work from home. Technology has been a crucial factor in enabling the ODVA staff to provide the same level of great service to veterans throughout the state. For instance, at the end of the month, the Annual VSO Training Conference will be conducted virtually by the ODVA Training and Certification Team.

In ODVA budget discussions, each agency was asked to reduce its budget by 8%; ODVA was able to do this by using staffing vacancies, while protecting programs and maintaining current staff levels. ODVA will continue to receive the lottery funds. The agency is about as well positioned as possible for the 2021 session.

The Oregon Women Veterans Conference, hosted by ODVA, was rescheduled to May 22-23, 2021 at the Riverhouse on the Deschutes in Bend, OR. However, if the conference cannot be held in person, it may have to be held virtually.

The search for a new Women Veterans Coordinator continues as ODVA was not successful in picking a replacement for Elizabeth Estabrooks on the last round. If UVGO members know of any possible candidates for this position, please let Kelly know.

In reference to the wildfires, some of the ODVA team members were evacuating their residences. The Oregon Veterans Home in Lebanon, OR was not in danger itself, but care was taken to ensure that the smoke inhalation did not harm the residents. Likewise, the remote

location of the Oregon Veterans Home in The Dalles, OR ensured the facility was safe from the wildfires and allowed the staff to work without any issues.

The occupancy of the Oregon Veterans Homes is slightly lower than before; the COVID-19 containment measures are working, with few deaths occurring because of the virus.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

ODVA Senior Policy Advisor, Jennifer (Jenny) Donovan, reported that, in the Second Special Session, the emphasis was on balancing the budget; there were significant shortfalls and the legislature had to look at ways to cut to come up with a balanced budget. The Emergency Board met seven or eight times to determine the cuts which all state agencies would be required to make.

Legislative Days were held the end of September to look at the 2021 session. On September 30, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency legislation was put into effect that no Oregonian could be evicted from their homes. Representative Paul Evans is looking at the State definition of "veteran" and is having ongoing conversations to see if it needs to be changed. There was more funding allocated for the Veterans Treatment Courts. Those with 50% or more disability are guaranteed not to have any gaps in receiving their medications. Institutions of higher learning will now recognize life experiences and give students credit for them. ODVA Veterans housing funds will be increased. Senator Manning is in conversation with the Vietnam War Memorial for funding; the Parks Committee, who has the authority to allow the Memorial to happen, has questions before moving forward. The Judiciary Committee wants to establish 2 or 3 more positions for Veterans Long Term Care and Guardianship/Ombudsmen from general and lottery funds. The Veterans Committee is working on policy solutions for issues affecting women veterans. Apprenticeship programs are also being discussed.

From mid-November to mid-December, the ODVA will be putting its budget together. Legislative Session starts on January 15, 2021.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS TRIBAL VETERANS PROGRAM UPDATE:

Sheronne Blasi, ODVA Director of Statewide Veteran Services, presented an overview of the ODVA Tribal Veteran Program. Native Americans serve in the military at the highest rate, per capita, of any other ethnic group. There are an estimated 150,000 tribal vets in the US, with approximately 3,000 living in Oregon – urban and rural. They have served with distinction for over 200 years, in every major conflict, honoring their warrior tradition. Oregon's 9 federally recognized tribes have traditionally honored their veterans and provided support:

- Burns Paiute Tribe
- Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians
- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

- Coquille Tribe
- Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians
- Klamath Tribes

ODVA has partnered with Oregon's federally recognized tribes over the last several years. Tribal Veterans have also served on ODVA's Veterans' Advisory Committee.

Three ODVA Focused Outcome Areas for Tribal Veterans:

- **Target Advocacy and Access to Veteran Services:** As with all our ODVA program areas, we have been partnering to target advocacy & access to veterans, services, including claims & appeals
 - Tribal Veteran Representatives (TVRs)
 - Have provided information about VA benefits to veterans and their families
 - TVRs are not accredited with the VA to file claims or appeals, but do assist with completely the paperwork
 - Most tribes have at least one TVR
 - ODVA has partnered with USDVA to conduct annual training to TVR for several years
 - VA law updates, benefit programs, suicide awareness and prevention
 - Tribal Veteran Service Officers (TVSOs):
 - ODVA has advocated for the creation of a Tribal Veteran Services Officer program for the 9 tribes for several years:
 - Recognized that tribal veterans should be served by someone who best understands the unique challenges they may face
 - Similar to CVSOs – accredited, co-located near other health/human services
 - Addition of Tribal Veteran Services Officers (TVSO) ODVA continued to work with the USDVA Office of Tribal Government Relations to provide Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes better representation for USDVA claims and appeals.
 - In the 2019 session the legislature provided, for the first time, pass-through funds to support Tribal Veteran Service Offices for tribes that have an agreement with ODVA and have employed a Tribal Veteran Services Officer (TVSO).
 - This program, like the County Veteran Services Officer (CVSO) program, assists veterans and their eligible dependents in obtaining earned state and federal veterans' benefits.
 - Currently, ODVA has agreements with three Oregon tribes, two of which had hired a TVSO as of July 2020.
 - Warm Springs – has not yet hired a TVSO
 - CTUIR – Sam Spino (accredited)
 - Grand Ronde – Ramona Quenelle (working towards her accreditation)
- **Increase Access to Healthcare and Social Services:** ODVA has a strong partnership with the VA Office of Tribal Government Relations

- TVA training w/healthcare and behavioral healthcare updates from federal VA and other partners; TVSOs can provide this access as well
 - 2019 OHA/ODVA Access to Behavioral Healthcare Study included specific findings for tribal veterans; OHA is working to deploy funding to the tribes for the behavioral healthcare needs of veterans.
 - ODVA VS grants were awarded to tribes for behavioral healthcare and healthcare-- both urban and rural awards
 - A few tribes applied for and received ODVA's veterans' suicide awareness and prevention grants (available to counties and tribes)
 - ODOT awarded a few grants this year to tribes for the new Rural Veteran Healthcare Transportation Grant – in partnership with ODVA (lottery funds).
- **Promote and Participate in Good Government-to-Government Relationships to help shape veteran services available to tribal veterans.**
 - 2019 Legislative session also authorized ODVA to hire a Tribal Veteran Coordinator
 - One of the roles of this coordinator will be to continue to build upon our G2G relationships
 - Learning about tribal consultations
 - However, despite extensive efforts have not yet identified a qualified candidate to fill this important role
 - ODVA participates in regular G2G meetings/discussions
 - Includes the 9 tribes, and state of OR agencies focused on health, education, and other human services
 - Annual Tribal Government Days
 - Have also presented at the annual Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Conference (Veterans Committee)

In summary, Sheronne stated that ODVA was looking forward to continuing its work with the tribes and the federal VA to better serve Oregon tribal veterans and honor their warrior service.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- **MOTION:** At the July 11, 2020 UVGO Meeting, a motion was made and passed that the UVGO Chair send letters to the Chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee stating that “Any lottery funds allocated to the ODVA budget remain in that budget and not be moved out of ODVA to any outside agency or for any outside use.”
- **ACTION TAKEN:** The UVGO Chair sent letters to the following on October 2, 2020:
 - Senator Betsy Johnson, Senator Elizabeth Steiner-Hayward, and Representative Dan Rayfield - Co-Chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee
 - Representative Paul Evans - Chair of the House Veterans Affairs Committee
 - Senator James Manning - Chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee

- **Officers, Chaplain, and Standing Committees for 2020-2021**
 - Chair: Mary J. Mayer, AFA
 - First Vice Chair: Jim Willis, 40 and 8
 - Second Vice Chair: Jack LaBox, American Legion
 - Secretary/Treasurer: Robert Haltiner, NCOA
 - Immediate Past Chair: Wayne Harvey
- Chaplain: Jack LaBox, American Legion
- Governance Committee Chair: Mary J. Mayer, AFA
- **Legislative Committee Chair:** This position remains vacant.
 - **ACTION:** At the UVGO Meeting, Jim Willis thought he knew of any individual who might be willing to assume this position; he will get back to the UVGO Chair after he contacts this individual.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **ODVA’s Veteran Service Grant Program:** Jacqueline Kemp, the ODVA Grants Coordinator, contacted the UVGO Chair and indicated that she needed more volunteers to help evaluate the Veteran Service Grant Proposals. Proposals are due to ODVA on October 11, 2020; evaluators will receive approximately 6 proposals to evaluate from October 16-29. If members were interested, they were asked to contact the UVGO Chair or Jacqueline immediately.
- **UVGO Nomination for Veterans Care Centers of Oregon (VCCO) Board Member**
 - **Purpose:** VCCO is a 501(c)(3) founded in 2003 with the sole purpose of contracting with the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) to operate the Oregon Veterans’ Homes (OVH – The Dalles and OVH – Lebanon) Since its founding, VCCO modified its mission to include the ability to provide a broad-spectrum of services as the opportunity arises.
 - **Board:** The VCCO Board is comprised of 13 veterans from various military branches, representatives from veteran’s service organizations, county representatives, healthcare professionals, and former staff of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. All members are volunteers who have dedicated their time to honor those who have served.
 - **VCCO Bylaws** call for 2 individuals from member organizations of UVGO to be Board Members
 - Current UVGO Members on VCCO Board: Robert Haltiner and Gary Zwicker
 - Gary Zwicker’s term as VCCO Board Member ends in December 2020
 - UVGO needs to nominate a replacement for Gary Zwicker who must be approved by the Governor’s ODVA Advisory Council and the VCCO Board, which is under contract with ODVA
 - **Nomination:** The UVGO Chair received one nomination for **William J. (Bill) Tidd**, the Air Force Association Representative to the UVGO; there were no other nominations from the floor.

- The motion was made and passed that the UVGO Chair send a letter to the ODVA Director, telling her of the UVGO nominee and asking her to present his nomination to the Chair and Board members for approval at its last VCCO Board Meeting of the year on October 21, 2020 (probably via Zoom)
- **Need to Recruit/Reinstate the Following to UVGO:**
 - Department of Oregon – Marine Corps League
 - Navy League (Oregon)
 - Women Marines Association (Oregon)
 - Other
- **Remaining Meeting Schedule for 2020-2021**
 - Saturday, January 9, 2021
 - Saturday, April 10, 2021
 - Saturday, July 10, 2021
- **Suggested Topics and/or Guest Speakers for Future UVGO Meetings**
 - Selected Oregon Legislators:
 - Senator James Manning, Jr. – Chair, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
 - Representative Paul Evans – Chair, House Veterans Affairs Committee
 - Veterans’ Treatment Courts
 - ODVA State-Wide Volunteer Program (POC: Mark Newell, ODVA)
 - ODVA Behavioral Health Study: Highlight recommendations from ODVA and OHA
 - **ACTION:** Sheronne Blasi will send the Executive Summary for this study to the UVGO Chair so she can pass it on to the UVGO membership.
 - Presumptive Benefits Bill
 - **ACTION:** Sarah Callen said she would send the UVGO Chair information on this initiative so she could send it to the UVGO membership.

ITEMS OF INTEREST:

- **Annual Report to the Governor from the Advisory Committee to the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs – September 2020**
 - The Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs has submitted its Advisory Committee Annual Report to the Governor, which provides an overview of ODVA’s programs and accomplishments in fiscal year 2019-20.
 - While maintaining core internal operations and existing programs, FY 20 was marked by the creation of new programs funded by Measure 96 Lottery dollars and the unprecedented COVID-19 health crisis and resulting economic impact on veterans.
 - “As a network of veterans helping veterans, we consider it nothing less than an honor and privilege to play a role in caring for those who served our nation and their families,”

said ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick. “Although much has changed since ODVA began in 1945, our commitment to those who sacrificed for our state and nation has never wavered. The work we have accomplished this past year is important, and just as critical as ever.”

- The Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs’ Annual Report can be found here: www.oregon.gov/odva/Connect/Pages/Reports.aspx

- **2021 Oregon Women Veterans Conference**
 - **Hosted by** the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA)
 - **Date:** May 22-23, 2021
 - **Location:** Riverhouse on the Deschutes, 3075 N Business 97, Bend, OR 97703-7511.
 - **Invitees:** All women who are serving or have served in the military are invited. No conference fee, but individual must pay her own lodging and transportation.
 - **Veterans’ Organizations:**
 - should set up Membership Information Tables (no charge for table).
 - become sponsors and provide monetary contribution
 - **Sponsorship Levels:**
 - Contributing Sponsor: \$250 - \$999
 - Bronze Sponsor: \$1,000 - \$1,999
 - Silver Sponsor: \$2,000 - \$3,999
 - Gold Sponsor: \$4,000 - \$5,999
 - Platinum Sponsor: \$6,000 - \$9,999
 - Elite Sponsor: Main Conference Sponsors - \$10,000 and above
 - **UVGO Contribution:** \$1,000.00
 - Any questions should be addressed to Martha.Garcia@state.or.us

- **42nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games for July 2023 in Portland, OR**
 - The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is co-presented between the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America. 650 to 700 athletes attend these games from every state, Puerto Rico, and England.
 - The Games serve Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Amputations, and other central neurological impairments with the goal to increase their independence, healthy activity, and quality of life through wheelchair sports and recreation. Veterans are being exposed to wheelchair sports at their home VAMC or PVA Chapters as part of their rehabilitation to improve function, independence, and getting them active in their home communities in sport and fitness.
 - The National Veterans Wheelchair Games has 19 different events in which Veterans can choose to participate. Events such as Wheelchair Basketball, Softball, Swimming, Cycling, Power Lifting, and Trap Shooting are just a few of the events that support this dynamic competition.
 - To carry out a successful event, history has shown that it takes upwards of 3,000 volunteers from the community to bring this event together. There will be many

opportunities for organizations--such as the MOAA Portland Chapter--to sponsor/donate to the general operation or specific events/needs.

- Games were cancelled for 2020
- Hosts: August 2021 – New York City; July 2022 – Tempe, AZ
- Games will be held the first week of July 2023 in Portland, OR
- Local contacts:
 - **Shaun D. Benson, CAVS**
Local Organizing Committee Chair
Chief, Voluntary Service
VA Portland Health Care System
(503) 273-5042
shaun.benson@va.gov

Tom Hurt

Executive Director
Oregon Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America
(503) 362-7998
exec.dir@oregonpva.org

- **Update on the Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds Project**
 - **Resources:** For additional information and the current proposed design of the Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds project, please visit the website for the Vietnam War Memorial Fund at www.vietnamwarmemorialfund.org
 - **For additional information, contact: Steve Bates, President - Vietnam War Memorial Fund; email: vietnamwarmem@aol.com office phone: 503-663-6271**

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER:

- Past Chair Wayne Harvey asked if Stand-downs were occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. Henry Hamel said that the American Legion members were working with homeless veterans, either from home or physically going around to check on them. Kelly Fitzpatrick, ODVA Director, said that ODVA's partners were continuing to support homeless veterans – despite the lack of Stand-downs.
- Curt Loop stated that the AUSA Conference would be held in April 2021; it is not clear whether the event will be virtual or in-person.
- DAV Rep, Henry Hamel, and DAV Aux Rep, Karen Haltiner, stated that the DAV Fall Conference was being held in person in Albany, OR on Halloween.
- Jim Willis again stated that he would contact a potential UVGO Legislative Committee Chair.

- The UVGO Chair said that the AFA Conference in September 2020 was and the MOAA Board of Directors Meetings in October 2020 will be held virtually.
- The UVGO Chair welcomed the new American Legion Rep, John Lee,, to the UVGO Meeting, and she thanked Tony Sebbio for hosting the virtual meeting.

The next meeting will be held on **Saturday, January 9, 2021** from **12:00 to 2:00 pm** either virtually or at the Center 50+ in Salem, OR.

The meeting was adjourned at **1:36 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT HALTINER

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Reviewed by:

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